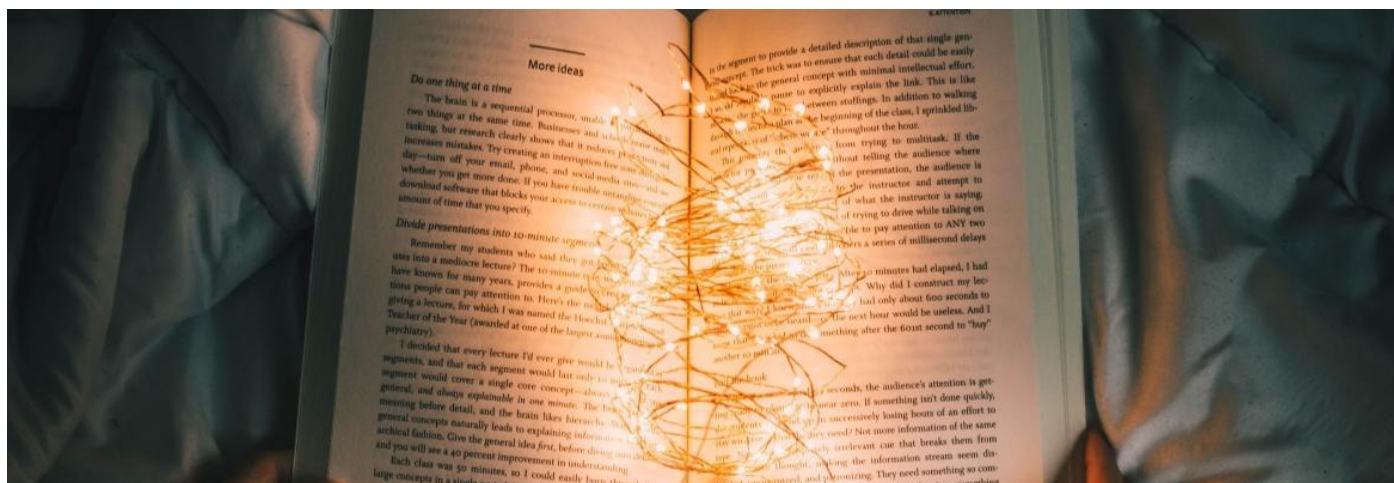


# Philosophy and Ethics

## Reading Challenge



Philosophy has provided the world with some of the most influential and important written works ever known. These works have sparked debate and enquiry and challenge an inquisitive mind. Whether you are planning on studying Philosophy at University or not – a great undergraduate student (i.e. one that universities are looking for), is one who is prepared to read around subjects; independently reading things to challenge them and compliment their studies. In short – there is more to A Level study than just reading the textbook.

The following books *complement* your A Level course. They are not directly related to the course and are not mandatory. However, the more you read the more you know – and this is extremely important in Philosophy.

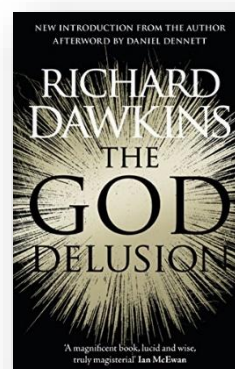
Your challenge is to read as many of these books as you can throughout the course. When you have read 3 books – there is a prize! How you do this is up to you – you could do 1 a term, or 1 a half term depending on how quickly you read.

Below is a quick synopsis of each book to help you choose which ones you want to read. I have also indicated where (if at all) this may be relevant to your course.

### “The God Delusion”: Richard Dawkins

Richard Dawkins is the Charles Simony Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University. This is probably his most famous book, in which Dawkins attempts to show the irrationality of a belief in God by attacking the idea of such a being on all fronts. He makes his case by providing critical examinations of the role of religion in history, in debunking traditional arguments for God’s existence, and through the power of Darwinian natural selection as a replacement for supernatural causes.

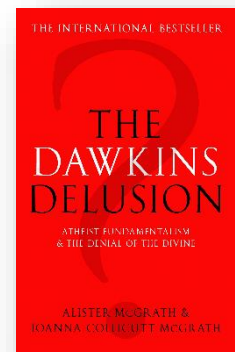
*This relates to the “The Challenge of Secularism” (Year 2 DCT)*



### **“The Dawkins Delusion”: Alister McGrath**

Alister McGrath challenges Dawkin’s ideas. Once an atheist himself, he gained a doctorate in molecular biophysics before going on to become a leading Christian theologian. He wonders how two people, who have reflected at length on substantially the same world, could possibly have come to such different conclusions about God. McGrath subjects Dawkins’ critique of faith to rigorous scrutiny. He asks such questions as; is faith intellectual nonsense? Are science and religion locked in a battle to the death? Can the roots of Christianity be explained away scientifically? Is Christianity simply a force for evil?

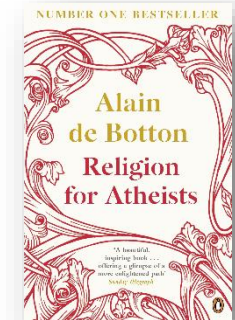
*This relates to “Arguments for the existence or nonexistence of God” (Year 1 Philosophy); “The Challenge of Secularism” (Year 2 DCT)*



### **“Religion for Atheists”: Alain de Botton**

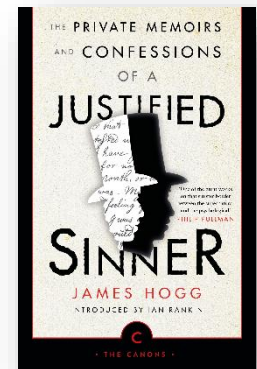
All of us, whether religious, agnostic or atheist, are searching for meaning. And in this wise and life – affirming book, non – believer Alain de Botton both rejects the supernatural claims of religion and points out just how many good ideas they sometimes have about how we should live. And he suggests that non believers can learn and steal from them. Picking and choosing from the thousands of years of advice assembled by the world’s great religions to get practical insights on art, community, love, friendship, work, life and death, Alain de Botton shows us a range of fascinating ideas on topics including relationships, work, culture, love and death – that could be of use to all of us, irrespective of whether we do or don’t believe.

*This relates to “The Challenge of Secularism” (DCT Year 2); “Religious Pluralism and Society” (DCT Year 2)*



### **“The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner”: James Hogg**

A novel by the Scottish author James Hogg was published anonymously in 1824. Considered by turns part gothic novel, part psychological mystery, part satire, part case study of totalitarian thought – it can also be thought of as an early example of modern crime fiction in which the story is told, for the most part, from the point of view of its criminal antihero. The action of the novel is located in a historically definable Scotland and implies a pseudo – Christian world of angels, devils, and demonic possession. The narrative is set against the antinomian societal structure flourishing the borders of Scotland in Hogg’s day.

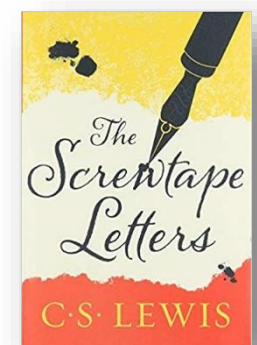


### **“Screwtape Letters: Letters from a Senior to a Junior Devil”: C.S. Lewis**

A milestone in the history of popular theology, ‘The Screwtape Letters’ is an iconic classic on spiritual warfare and the power of the devil.

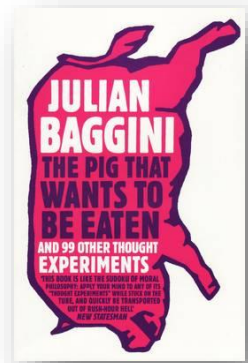
This profound and striking narrative takes the form of a series of letters from Screwtape, a devil high in the Infernal Civil Service, to his nephew Wormwood, a junior colleague engaged in his first mission on earth trying to secure the damnation of a young man who has just become a Christian. Although the young man initially looks to be a willing victim, he changes his ways and is ‘lost’ to the young devil.

Dedicated to Lewis’s friend and colleague J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘The Screwtape Letters’ is a timeless classic on spiritual conflict and the invisible realities which are part of our religious experience.



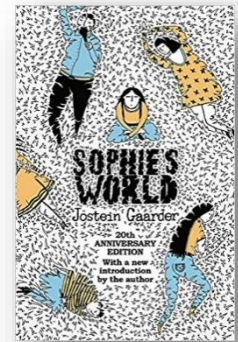
## **“The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten: And 99 Other Thought Experiments”: Julian Baggini**

Is it right to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? Are you really reading this book cover, or are you in a simulation? If God is all-powerful, could he create a square circle? Here are 100 of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas - questions to leave you inspired, informed and scratching your head, dumbfounded. Thought experiments are short scenarios that pose a moral or philosophy problem in a vivid and concrete way. In this book Julian Baggini present 100 of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas.



## **“Sophie’s World”: Jostein Gaarder**

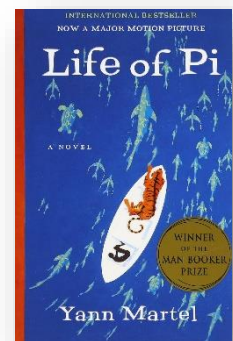
The international bestseller about life, the universe and everything. When 14-year-old Sophie encounters a mysterious mentor who introduces her to philosophy, mysteries deepen in her own life. Why does she keep getting postcards addressed to another girl? Who is the other girl? And who, for that matter, is Sophie herself? To solve the riddle, she uses her new knowledge of philosophy, but the truth is far stranger than she could have imagined. An addictive blend of mystery, philosophy and fantasy, Sophie's World is an international phenomenon which has been translated into 60 languages and sold more than 40 million copies.



## **“Life of Pi”: Yann Martel**

One boy, one boat, one tiger . . .

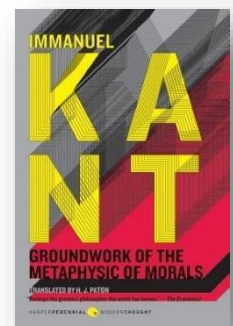
After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen-year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan - and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger. The scene is set for one of the most extraordinary and best-loved works of fiction in recent yet. Yann Martel was born in Spain in 1963. After studying philosophy at university, he worked at odd jobs and travelled before turning to writing at the age of twenty-six. He is the author of the internationally acclaimed 2002 Man Booker Prize-winning novel Life of Pi, which was translated into thirty-eight languages and spent fifty-seven weeks on the New York Times Bestseller List.



## **“Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals”: Immanuel Kant**

Published in 1785, Immanuel Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals ranks alongside Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics as one of the most profound and influential works in moral philosophy ever written. In Kant's own words, its aim is to identify and corroborate the supreme principle of morality, the categorical imperative. He argues that human beings are ends in themselves, never to be used by anyone merely as a means, and that universal and unconditional obligations must be understood as an expression of the human capacity for autonomy and self-governance. As such, they are laws of freedom.

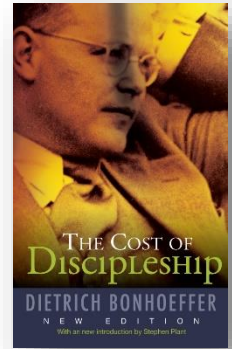
*This relates to “Kantian Ethics” (Year 1 Ethics)*



**“The Cost of Discipleship”: Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

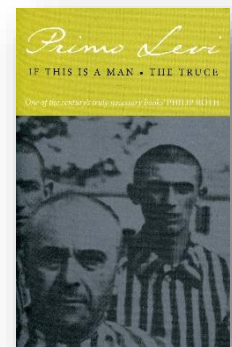
Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) is one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. His death at the hands of the Nazis has made him a modern martyr and an icon of radical Christianity. The Cost of Discipleship is one of the classics of modern theology. Perhaps Dietrich Bonhoeffer's most radical book, this reading of the Sermon on the Mount has influenced many Christians throughout the world over the last 50 years.

*This relates to “Christian Moral Action” (Year 1 DCT)*



**“If This Is a Man/ The Truce”: Primo Levi**

Primo Levi was born into a Jewish family in Turin, Italy, in 1919. He spent time in Auschwitz and his novel If This Is a Man is a harrowing account of his ordeal. Levi died in 1987. “If this is a Man” is a detailed account of his survival of Auschwitz. “The Truce” gives an exceptional insight into the aftermath of the holocaust and “settling” into a world that has been torn apart by human horror and suffering. **\*warning: this is not for the faint hearted\***



**Reading Record**

Name of Book	Date Started	Date Finished	Reflections